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1-26-2023

Rev. Dr. Don Davis and a Theology of Race

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Recommended Citation

McGeath, Mitch and Voss, Hank, "Rev. Dr. Don Davis and a Theology of Race" (2023). *Presentations*. 15. <https://pillars.taylor.edu/sr-undergradlecturevideos/15>

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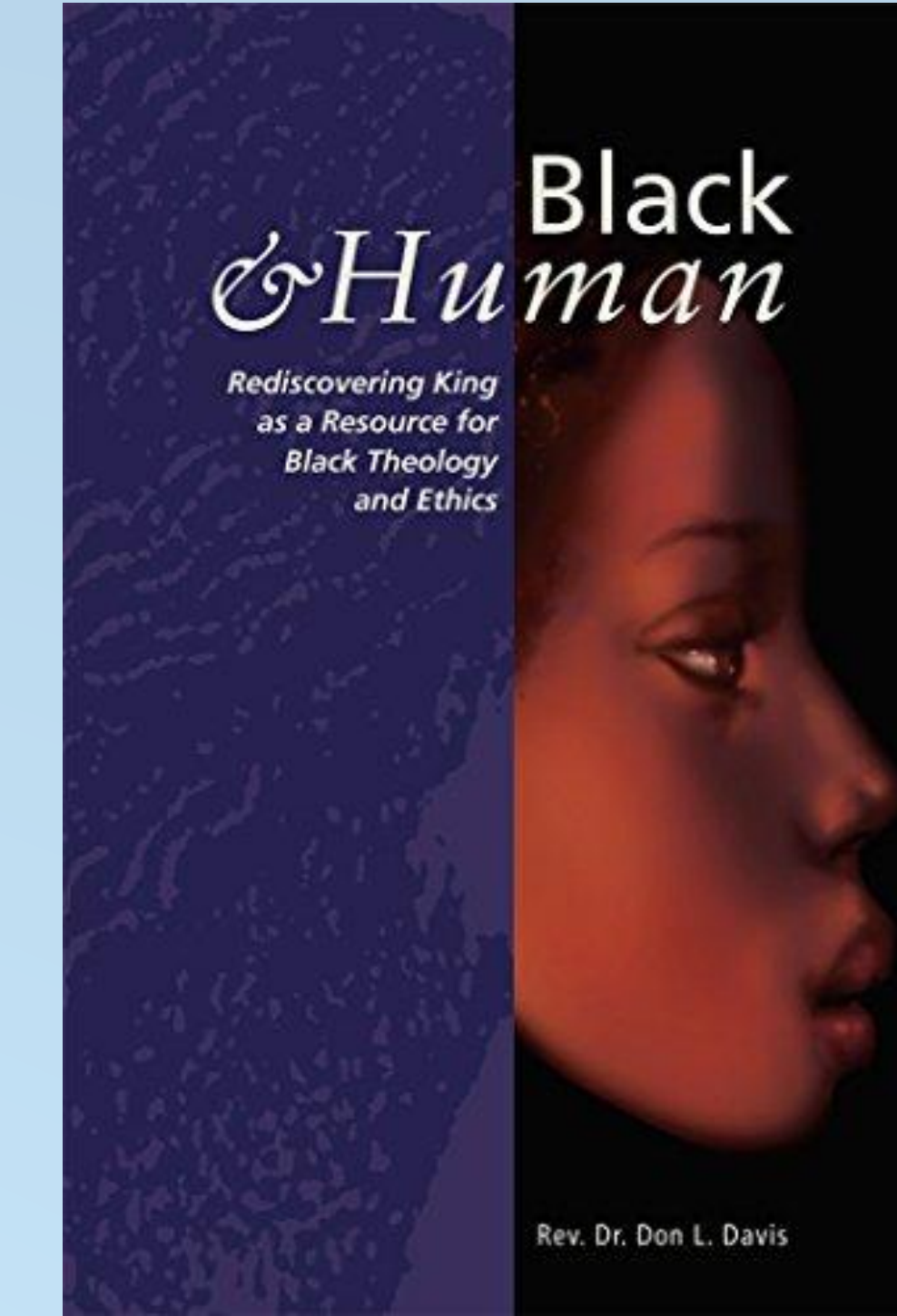
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THEOLOGY OF RACE?

All throughout history, specific aspects of God’s story have appealed to diverse audiences. In fact, Scripture speaks strongly to the human condition in many facets, containing themes of human plight, human and earthly kingdoms, a longing for the existential, redemption, and so much more.

A theology of race, although coined as a term in recent history, has existed as a way for God’s Word to speak directly to people on behalf of their own cultural experiences when they commune with the Lord ever since the Word was first spoken.

Although a theology of race attempts to explain how theological concepts can be especially relevant to all peoples of all cultures, this poster is focused solely on Rev. Dr. Don Davis’s writings and work regarding a theology of race. Most specifically, it focuses in on his area of expertise within a theology of race: Black theology.



BLACK THEOLOGY

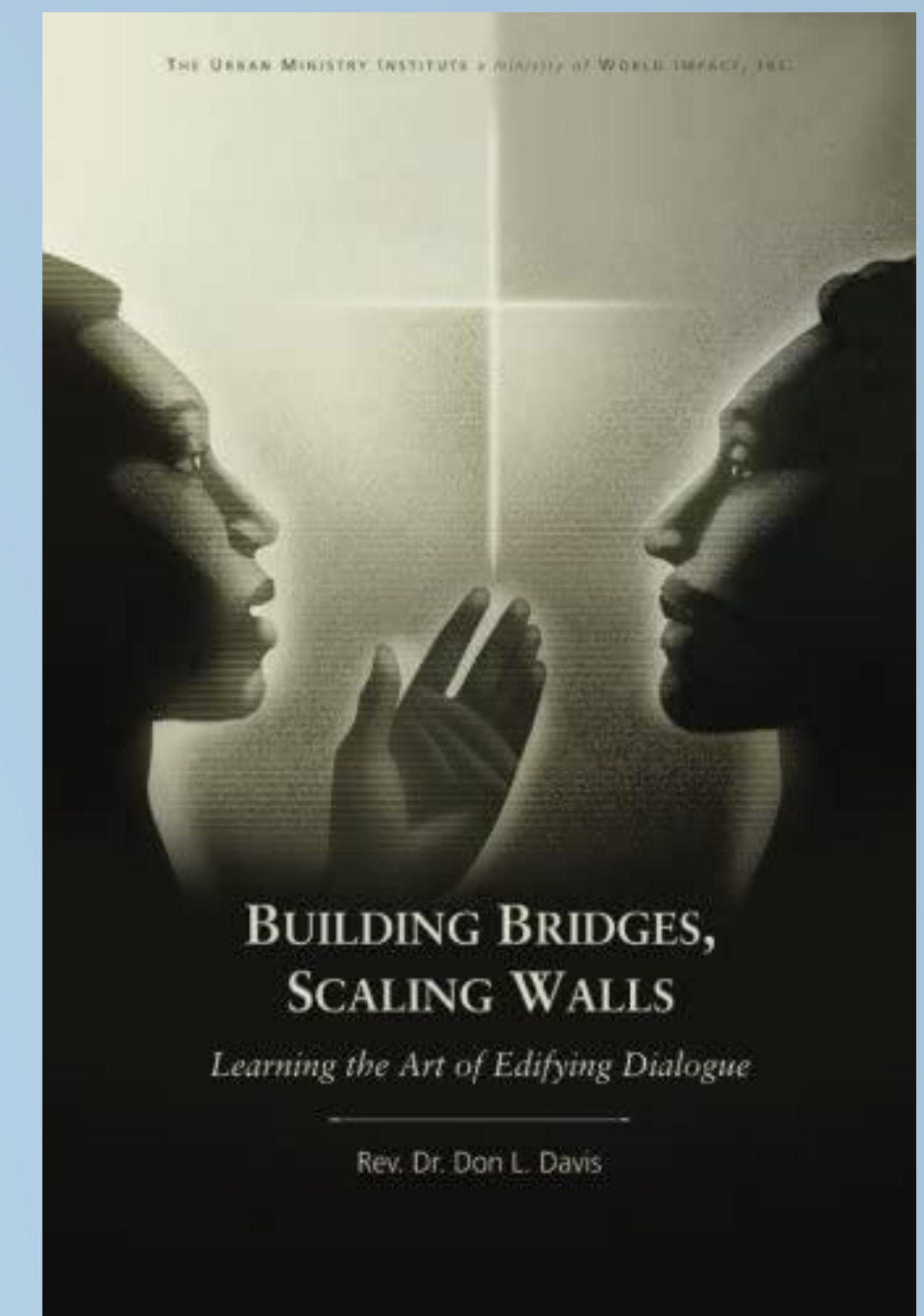
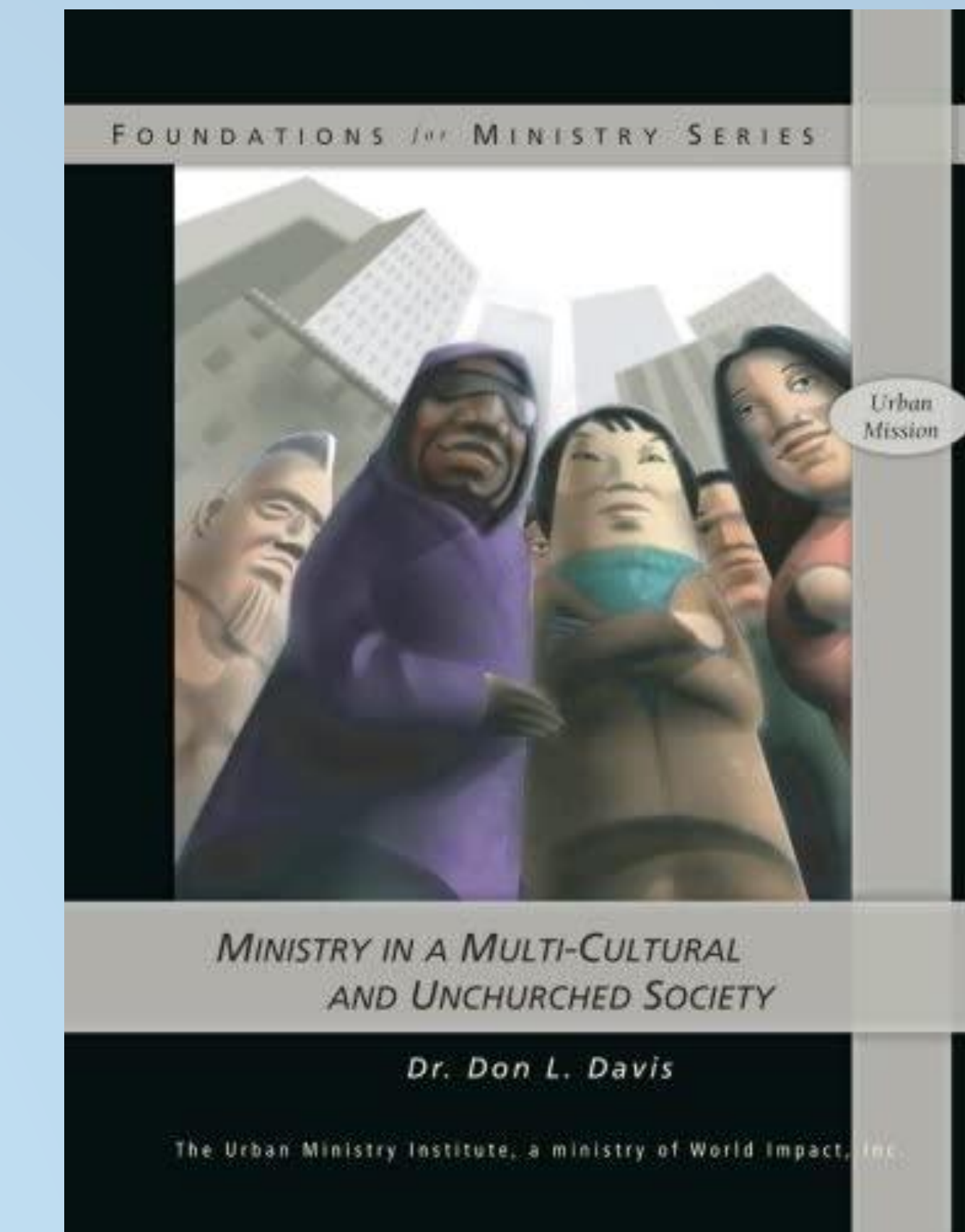
First and foremost, Dr. Davis recognizes that the various backgrounds and experiences of each person gives them a uniqueness exclusive to them, and each person is critically involved in God’s story. This shapes both his theology and his approach to multicultural ministry.

Dr. Davis proposes that the work of Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. captures the best of Black theology. His narrative on Black theology is liberating for Black people since it connects the Black experience to God’s story while maintaining a “fundamental interconnectedness among all human beings” (*Black and Human* 114). In contrast to the Black empowerment movement, Dr. King’s civil rights movement was able to educate and disciple people across racial boundaries.

Dr. Davis acknowledges with Dr. King the rich, turbulent, history of the Black community in the United States. Because of this history, theologies of suffering and empowerment are important for Black people. They provide things such as refuge, solidarity within the Black community, identity from God, and divine significance to Black struggles. Dr. Davis argues that Black theology is at its best when it does not appeal to a special “status of ontological Blackness,” but instead focuses on the equality that all people share in the eyes of God (*Black and Human* 155). **When Black culture—or any culture—is used to bring more perspective to the communion table of Jesus and his multi-cultural disciples, it is tremendously good. When it is used as an impetus for division, humiliation, or spite, it should be reconsidered.**

Furthermore, Dr. Davis emphasizes that the Jesus Christ who is revealed in God’s Word is not partial to one culture or ethnicity, because he came that “the world through him might be saved” (John 3:17) and is actively ministering to His people at the right hand of the Father, “not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance” (2 Pet 3:9). Therefore, no ethnicity, culture, or race should be exalted above another.

Finally, it is important to reiterate that the Church is a core part of Dr. Davis’s theology of race. The body of Christ brings unity, identity, and shared meaning to all of God’s people in an unmatched way.



SO WHAT?

Believers of all nations should rejoice together in their collective belonging to the priesthood of all believers, ministering in word and deed to the whole world (1 Pet. 2:9–10). Dr. Davis echoes the sentiments of Dr. King, who desperately desired the world to see the Black church as part of the beloved community reflecting Christ’s love in the face of discrimination.

As members of a royal priesthood of Christ, believers can and should be in respectful, candid, and vulnerable dialogue with one another for the sake of understanding how the ethnic, cultural, and socioeconomic experiences shape them. Dr. Davis emphasizes the power of a ‘ministry of listening’ and empathizing with those of different cultural backgrounds in *Building Bridges, Scaling Walls*, as he argues that we need to understand people from their perspective before we can attempt to make any in-roads in a ministry setting. One cannot expect to learn anything about a person of a different race by going into a conversation holding presuppositions or assumptions. **Instead, believers need to dig deep into the human experience of others before they can apply theology to a unique ethnic experience and place that person within God’s Kingdom story.**

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ONE HEAD. ONE BODY.

